



**"Empowering Families  
to Live Healthier  
Lives"**

# **The Health-Smart Church Program**

*A Church-Partnered Family Health  
Self-Empowerment Program*



*Principal Investigator:*

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*Co-Investigators:*

**Pastor Kevin W. Thorpe**

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**Bridgett Rahim-Williams, PhD**

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## *"Empowering Families to Live Healthie*

### ***Program Goals***

The goals of the Health-Smart Church Program are to: (a) empower participating African American women who have hypertension and/or are overweight and their families with the knowledge, skills, motivation, and support needed to achieve and/or maintain healthy blood pressure and BMI levels; (b) train pastors and church leaders to serve as health empowerment coaches for program participants and other church members; and (c) establish each participating church as a Health-Smart Church Center for promoting family and Community health.

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### ***Program Components***

The Program will involve:

- Attending a 4-hour workshop about health-smart behaviors for achieving a healthy weight and blood pressure
  - Participating in weekly fun exercises and receiving health promotion support from a Student Health Empowerment Coach Consultant for two months
  - Participating in a Healthy Vegetable Cook-Off to compete for cash prizes
  - Completing questionnaires and providing health measurements such as blood pressure and height/weight
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## ***Program Participants***

The following participants will be recruited from Gainesville, FL and surrounding areas:

- 12 African American churches
- One pastor and four church leaders from each participating church, to serve as Health Empowerment Coaches
- 11 African American women and a household member (preferably a child aged 9-17 years old) from each participating church



## ***A Family- and Community-Focused Program***



African American women typically do most of the food shopping and cooking in their families; thus, they are in a good position to have a positive impact on their family's health. It is vital that

African American women learn about healthy behaviors and engage in these behaviors so that they can model positive health behaviors for their family members. Since churches have long been a major source of support and influence in the African American community, it is important to empower church leaders and pastors with the knowledge and resources for enabling women as well as family and community members to engage in healthy cooking and overall healthy lifestyles.

## ***Compensation***

Program participants will receive the following compensation:

- Church leader participants - **\$75**
- Women participants - **\$45 + more\***
- Household member participants - **\$30**

\*Women participants who participate in a Healthy Vegetable Cook-Off will win cash prizes up to \$20, and some will additionally receive \$20 a week for three months to buy vegetables.

## ***Potential Program Benefits***

The Health-Smart Church Program will likely improve the following among its participants:

- Blood pressure, body weight, and cholesterol levels
- Knowledge for living healthy lives
- Frequency of engaging in health-smart (health promoting) behaviors
- Ultimately, we envision each participating church serving as a Health-Smart Church Center. At these Centers, church and community members will find resources and support for consistently engaging in health-smart behaviors throughout their lives.



## ***Health-Smart Behaviors***

Below are some health-smart behaviors about which participants will learn in the Health-Smart Church Program:

- Eating a healthy breakfast each day
- Consuming more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and preparing these foods in a healthy manner
- Drinking water and other healthy beverages throughout each day
- Eating low-fat, low-calorie, and low-salt foods and snacks
- Walking at least 10,000 steps per day
- Engaging in moderate-to-intense physical activity at least three times per week
- Reducing overall caloric intake
- Restricting daily fat calories to 30% of total caloric intake or less
- Restricting television/video watching to 2 hours or less each day





## Dr. Carolyn M. Tucker

Dr. Tucker is a Distinguished Alumni Professor, Professor of Psychology and Community Health and Family Medicine, and Richard and Thelma O. C. Barney Term Professor of Health Disparities in the College of Medicine. Over her 30-year academic career, she has worked diligently and passionately along with her research teams to achieve the following three goals: (1) to promote culturally sensitive health care and health promoting lifestyles among individuals with low family incomes and racial/ethnic minority individuals toward the goal of reducing the health disparities that disproportionately impact these groups; (2) to promote school and life success among racial/ethnic minority children and children with low family incomes; and (3) to mentor a generation



of undergraduate and graduate psychology students and pre-medical student researchers who, as a consequence of this mentoring, will be prepared to conduct community-

partnered culturally sensitive health and/or education disparities focused research in culturally diverse and racial/ethnic minority community settings.

Dr. Tucker's research and related intervention programs reflect her genuine commitment to being a scientist-practitioner and human being who diligently works to find and inspire culturally sensitive, evidence-based, and community-partnered solutions for reducing the health and education disparities that plague our nation.



## **Dr. Tucker and her Behavioral Medicine Research Team**

*Team members include culturally-diverse  
undergraduate students, graduate students,  
community members, and faculty.*

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